

award to honor courage and fortitude and strength in promoting freedom.

And we have had an amazing discussion. My spirits are enriched by talking to freedom lovers and freedom fighters. We've got a man from the Sudan who talked eloquently about free press. We had a doctor from Zimbabwe who talked about the human condition and the need for the United States to make sure we stay engaged with the democracy movements and help people who are hungry.

I talked to two really unusual ladies, one from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She is very concerned about free elections, and she wants to make sure people in the rural part of her country are represented in free elections.

And then we had an amazing discussion with a lady from Sierra Leone but who's working in Liberia. And one of the most amazing stories is when she recounted the fact that she was escaping Liberia in the mid-1990s and had to get on a fishing boat to escape the authorities who wanted to bring—to do her harm because she expressed her desire for people to be free.

Again, I want to thank all of you for doing what you have done. I'm proud to be in your company. I'm proud to have you here in the Oval Office. I thank you for being witness to this universal fact: that liberty is universal in its application; that people everywhere desire to be free; that freedom is not just—belongs to the American citizens, freedom belongs to everybody. And you're courageous in your fight and your desire to spread the concept of freedom.

Congratulations on winning a very important award. Congratulations on being so courageous. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to National Endowment for Democracy's 2006 Democracy Award recipients Alfred Taban, Reginald Matchaba-Hove, Immaculee Birhaheka, and Zainab Hawa Bangura.

Remarks During a Run With Staff Sergeant Christian Bagge

June 27, 2006

The President. So I first met Christian when I went to Walter Reed—Brooke Army, San Antonio, Texas. And he said, "I want to run with you." He was in bed. He had lost both legs. I looked at him, like, you know, there's an optimistic person. But I could tell in his eyes that he meant it. And after a lot of hard work and a lot of compassionate care, this fine man is here on the South Lawn running with the President. And he ran the President into the ground, I might add. [Laughter]

But I'm proud of you. I'm proud of your strength; I'm proud of your character. Thank you for your service.

It's an amazing sight for me to be running with a guy who, last time I saw him, was in bed wondering whether or not—I was wondering whether or not he'd ever get out of bed. There was no doubt in his mind that he would.

Thanks for your service.

S. Sgt. Bagge. Your welcome, Mr. President.

The President. Good man. God bless you.

S. Sgt. Bagge. It's a privilege.

The President. We're not through running yet. Get out of the way. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:02 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. S. Sgt. Christian Bagge, USA, was injured in Iraq in June 2005 while serving in the Oregon National Guard.

Statement on Senate Action on a Proposed Constitutional Amendment To Prohibit Desecration of the American Flag

June 27, 2006

Today a bipartisan majority of United States Senators voted to protect our Nation's most important symbol through a Constitutional amendment to authorize Congress to prohibit the desecration of the American flag. Unfortunately, the final count fell short of the votes needed to send this important proposed amendment to the States for ratification.